

## Engagement

Engagement entails a client and outreach worker participating in an activity that involves a positive interaction, whereby the client is made to feel as comfortable as possible while listening to and speaking with the outreach worker. Engagement involves identifying and making contact with members of the target group in their natural environments, establishing rapport, enlisting commitment to behavior change, and providing information about risk behaviors and strategies to eliminate or reduce risk.

### I. RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Outreach workers can use innovative methods to gain access to the target populations. It begins the process of regular and ongoing outreach to a particular group.

#### Knowledge

- Understand approaches to outreach that have been found to be effective with hard-to-reach populations (such as injection drug users, commercial sex workers, and homeless substance users);
- Understand the philosophy and history of outreach and its role in preventing disease transmission, increasing access to services, reducing risk behaviors, and supporting and facilitating mental health and substance abuse treatment;
- Understand the role of the outreach worker;
- Understand the active substance abuser's social and life circumstances.

#### Skills

- Be able to conduct street outreach to individuals;
- Be able to conduct group presentations to organizations;
- Be able to conduct community outreach;
- Be able to demonstrate empathic understanding;

- Be able to engage in coaching, mentoring, and teaching techniques relative to the promotion and maintenance of health;
- Develop leadership and facilitation methods appropriate for group presentations.

### Attitudes

- Develop respect for the client;
- Recognize the importance of cooperation and collaboration with the client;
- Maintain professional objectivity;
- Recognize personal and professional limitations;
- Maintain nonjudgmental attitudes and behaviors;
- Appreciate the role and power of the group facilitator;
- Build trust within the community.

## II. CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Cultural sensitivity is a set of attitudes, practices, or policies that respect—rather than merely show—receptivity to different cultures of people. This includes a thorough knowledge of a particular group’s values, norms, mores, traditions, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions.

### Knowledge

- Understand cultural factors affecting responsiveness to varying outreach strategies;
- Understand clients’ cultural norms, biases, and preferences;
- Know and understand the impact that cultural norms can have on clients’ decision-making processes.

### Skills

- Be able to adapt outreach strategies to unique client characteristics and circumstances;

### Attitudes

- Develop the willingness to be flexible in meeting clients' needs;
- Develop a nonjudgmental and respectful acceptance of cultural, behavioral, and value differences.

## III. SAFETY AND AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENT

Personal and group safety are paramount for any action, reaction, or movement when performing outreach to any populations.

### Knowledge

- Understand street outreach tactics (such as working in pairs and interviewing using the third person);
- Understand the “Do’s and Don’ts” of outreach work (such as informing the appropriate people of your whereabouts and not getting personally involved with clients);
- Understand emergency protocols for outreach workers.

### Skills

- Be able to successfully canvass a target area (mapping);
- Be able to conduct a neighborhood needs assessment;
- Be able to implement various outreach strategies to a particular group or individual;
- Be able to work as a team, especially for self-protection;
- Be able to develop a plan of action for handling emergencies.

### Attitudes

- Develop an open-mindedness to gender and cultural issues;
- Appreciate various outreach strategies;
- Develop patience and perseverance;
- Acknowledge the need for self-protection;
- Be able to use cultural communication skills.

#### **IV. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

The outreach worker staff should reflect the ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity of the drug users targeted for the intervention. When appropriate, the outreach worker staff should include individuals who are bilingual and bicultural. Overcoming language barriers is particularly important in reinforcing prevention messages and helping to prevent relapse to drug use and the abandonment of risk-reduction efforts.

##### **Knowledge**

- Understand interviewing techniques, such as motivational interviewing and interviewing using open-ended questions;
- Understand counseling strategies that promote and support successful client engagement, such as the use of open-ended questions.

##### **Skills**

- Be able to implement appropriate engagement and interviewing approaches;
- Be able to demonstrate clear and concise written and verbal communication;
- Be able to participate in negotiation, advocacy, and problem solving.

##### **Attitudes**

- Develop respect for the contribution of clients and significant others;
- Develop the willingness to collaborate.